

Project Name: Statewide Web Based Special Education Case Management System

Agency: Department of Public Instruction

Business Unit/Program Area: Special Education Office

Project Sponsor: Bob Rutten

Project Manager: Val Brostrom

Project Description

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, Office of Special Education in collaboration with local school district and special education unit personnel will implement a statewide web based special education case management system.

This system would:

- Allow for a more streamlined special education process
- Increased monitoring capabilities
- Enhanced data reporting capabilities
- Improved management tools
- Improve the student contract system for state reimbursement

In an attempt to accomplish the development of such a system the following are the necessary objectives that will be key elements to successfully obtain the end product:

- Objective 1: Establish stakeholders to gather the requirements of an On-line IEP system. The stakeholders would have representation from local special education units, personnel from the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), along with individuals from other organizations as necessary.
- Objective 2: Contract technology support to assist in the completion of a Request for Information (RFI) to gain information from vendors about the ability of vendors to accomplish tasks.
- Objective 3: Work with technology support and stakeholders to determine the feasibility of purchasing a system and modifying or creating a new system to fit our needs.
- Objective 4: Procure the product or services needed as identified in the stakeholder requirements.
- Objective 5: Pilot the chosen system in select North Dakota Special Education Units.
- Objective 6: Make necessary changes and modifications identified in the pilot.
- Objective 7: Ensure all stakeholders have adequate training, feel comfortable with the new system, and have a support process to help with any issues and long term training needs.
- Objective 8: Implement a statewide IEP system for use by all Special Education units.

Business Need or Problem

1. The Need/Problem: The current special education paperwork process, including the Individualized Education Program (IEP) system, is cumbersome and contains many steps that are duplicative. Additionally, there are multiple versions, both software and paper procedures, attempting to accomplish the same desired ends throughout local programs in North Dakota. These multiple procedures cause a serious lack of consistency in data management and data sharing. The result of all

of this is that teachers/case managers, business personnel, and administrators spend an excessive amount of time completing and sharing inconsistent and sometimes inaccurate data. Excess time doing paperwork reduces teacher time with students.

2. The Need/Problem: North Dakota lacks a consistent means for ensuring compliance with Federal and State laws. Currently, there are multiple IEP systems in place throughout North Dakota that do not adequately reflect all the requisite component parts of the federally defined IEP process. As the Department of Public Instruction has the responsibility of monitoring local special education program compliance, inconsistent IEP systems in local school districts make it difficult for the state to ensure that all of the schools are in compliance with federal and state laws.

3. The Need/Problem: The Department of Public Instruction must report timely and accurate data to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in the U.S. Department of Education (DOE). There is also a trend towards increasing the required data reporting requirements with the reauthorization of IDEA 2004. IDEA 2004 mandated that each state create a State Performance Plan (SPP) specific to twenty performance and compliance data indicators. Annually, the state must create an Annual Performance Report (APR) that illustrates state outcomes in each of the twenty SPP data indicators. Additionally, OSEP requires an annual Part B 618 Child Count data submission specific to seven common areas. A majority of the data required for the SPP and the 618 Child Count Tables is currently contained in the student's IEP or within similarly defined collection systems. Due to multiple systems within the state, collecting timely and accurate data is challenging. The state could potentially be penalized by the Federal Department of Education for late reporting or inaccurate data submissions.

4. The Need/Problem: Local special education units need an assortment of specialized case management tools. Many of these case management tools were available in the past to local special education programs as part of Specis, an old DOS software tool, which was recently replaced with the Department of Public Instructions Special Education Membership Report. However, this new system did not replace the management tools. The loss of these management tools has reduced automated administrative management procedures for local special education programs. Some of the local unit directors believe those management tools were so important that they are attempting to maintain functionality of this old DOS program. Management tools that are no longer available to most special education units include the following:

- Pupils by Case Manager
- Manager Assignments
- Ability to print mailing labels
- Pupil Background
- Teacher Roster

5. The Need/Problem: The Department of Public Instruction is manually maintaining special education student contracts. Currently, the state funds \$15,500,000 each biennium on what are referred to as student contracts for high cost students. Currently, a system does not exist that automates the student contract procedure or attempts to control the escalating cost of such contracts.

Key Metrics		
Project Start Date	Estimated Length of Project	Estimated Cost
March 7, 2008	December 2008	\$1,000,000

Benefits to Be Achieved	
Project Objectives	Measurement Description
Reduce paperwork burden while creating a statewide uniform Online IEP system	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct satisfaction surveys with an approval rating

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamline the IEP process Increase teaching time 	of 80% or higher
<p>Improve local compliance as a result of an improved automated monitoring system statewide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Validation features embedded in the online IEP system will increase local compliance while reducing manual procedures. Ease internal processes for monitoring the compliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decrease manual monitoring procedures by 50% by the year 2009. Decrease time on internal monitoring by 50% by the year 2009. This would be done by conducting a survey with the unit directors.
<p>Improved Data reporting to the Dept. of Education and the Office of Special Ed Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This data source will be the most accurate source available for reporting to the public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved data reporting by 50% by the year 2009. This would occur due to a single source entering the data for each IEP.
Enhance local unit management tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey directors with an approval rating of 80% or higher.

Cost/Benefit Analysis

Anticipated Benefits:

- Streamlined automated special education paperwork process
 - ease the paperwork burden on teachers, case managers, business personnel, and administrators
 - create a paperwork process that is more meaningful for parents and case managers
 - greater consistency throughout all local programs
 - auto fill capabilities throughout the system
 - improve student outcomes
- Improved compliance monitoring
 - consistent means for monitoring local programs
 - increases compliance for 14,000 students who receive special education services
 - ability to perform desk audits
 - automate internal monitoring procedures
 - reduces travel time for monitoring
- Improved data reporting
 - automate access to student data
 - increase data accuracy
 - increase data alignment with local, state, and federal programs
 - increase automated report generation for SPP, APR, and 618 Child Count
 - eliminate duplicate processes
- Enhanced local unit management tools
 - enhance capacity to maintain quality local programs
 - increase local efficiency
 - improve financial controls
- Automated process for the student contract system
 - increase efficacy
 - cost analysis tools to track student contract costs and/or abnormalities

Implication of NOT doing project:

- Manual data entry by unit, district, and plant personnel will continue
- Paperwork burden for local programs increasing
- Manual entry is prone to duplication and errors
- Inconsistent data alignment between and among units, districts, and plants
- Staff burden will increase as data requirements increase
- Federal government data reporting will be less efficient and prone to error
- Student contract system has few monetary controls
- Unit, district, and local administrative functions remain less efficient
- Reduced monitoring effectiveness and increased monitoring time constraints
- Time spent completing paperwork is time NOT spent teaching students

Key Constraints or Risks	
RISK	Mitigation
There is a potential risk that all units may choose not use the system limiting the uniformity of data collection.	This risk is limited by a very in-depth review of the system requirements ensuring that a wide range of needs will be considered. In addition, the project will rely on significant involvement of all stakeholders. At a meeting in Bismarck on April 11, 2006, 100% of the unit directors and their technology partners supported the development of a Statewide Web Based Special Education Case Management System.
The costs of completing the overall project will be beyond the budget available.	An RFI will be conducted before committing significant funding to the project. If the RFI does show cost being too high, discussions will need to be held for further fiscal guidance. Costs to both local and state levels need to be kept as low as possible so everyone can afford the solution.
The developed system may not be compatible with technology currently being used in special education units and school districts.	Ensure stakeholder involvement in the decision making between functionality and minimum technical requirements while following industry/state specific interface standards.
Human resources available in the state special education office may be stretched beyond their potential and could be a possible risk to the project.	All efforts to appropriately plan and allocate money have been investigated and the necessary personnel needed to complete the project will be assigned.